

thousand miles from the port of Guyandotte, Va. I could but consider my arrival at that city, at that late hour, fortunate, as New Orleans cannot be seen under a more favourable aspect, than by approaching it under the cover of darkness. I beheld, as the boat rapidly advanced, an extended quarter of a circle, of about two miles in length, thickly lined with the floating palaces of the West, and then with the shipping from all parts of the world. The steamboats a blaze of light from stem to stern—some letting off their steam with deafening noise, whilst some were extinguishing their fires with hissing sounds, as the water was thrown upon the red hot brands under the boilers; whilst, at the same time, lights from the decks and the cabin windows of the shipping, extended an illumination, until it was lost in distant littleness; from which lurid glare Jack tar, with merry laugh and song, could be seen and heard furling his sail and tackle, above the shouts of porters, and the rattling of drays and hacks; when far above the levee, the innumerable lights of the tall houses of the city, shed a halo of brilliancy over a scene the equal of which I had never before beheld, and which, when taken altogether, really presented to the eye a magnificent crescent, adorned with sparkling scintillating gems. And thus, most apropos, has the city of New Orleans been denominated the “Crescent City.”

CHAPTER II.

Visited Collector of the Port. His kind attention. Engaged passage on the schooner Amazon for Vera Cruz. Reception by the Mate. Destined to lodge in the Ladies' Cabin. Confusion of the Mate by the Captain's arrival. His hospitality. Towed by the Arkansas. Detained by a fog. The tow drifted. The Steamer by a backward revolution came stern upon the broadside of the Amazon. Much damage sustained. Captain Harding in a passion. We sail for Baliza. The Captain leaves the Amazon and returns with a pilot. We again set sail. Meeting of the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. Cast anchor at the mouth of the Pass. Departure of the Pilot, and his rescue from drowning. Out of sight of land. The Captain's indisposition. A storm at sea. A man lost. View of the Perote mountain. A calm. Catching Fish. The Orizava. By telescope viewed the port of Vera Cruz. Boarded by a Pilot. Anchored under the walls of San Juan de Ulloa. Disembarked from the Amazon for the Mole. Novel sights. First night in Vera Cruz. Description of Vera Cruz. Health of Vera Cruz. Northers.

ON the evening of the 8th of November I, without delay, visited Mr. Dorsey, the Collector of the Customs at the Port of New Orleans, a gentleman with whom I had to transact some public business. And here I cannot refrain from saying that Mr. Dorsey, who had then been but recently appointed Collector, had, by his indefatigable industry, won the esteem of all who had done business with him; and for the interest he exhibited in forwarding me in my preparation for my journey to Mexico, I shall ever feel grateful.

Through Mr. D. I was informed that the schooner Amazon was the only vessel in port taking in freight, bound for Vera Cruz, and would sail upon the evening of the 9th inst. I therefore did not hesitate, through the house of Messrs. Capdervill & Cucullu, who were owners of the schooner, to secure my passage; and having completed all my other arrangements in the city, I accordingly, upon the evening of the 9th, that having been the appointed time for the sailing of the Amazon, sent my baggage aboard of her, where I soon followed.

Upon my arrival on deck of the little vessel, for it was only of ninety tons burthen, the captain being absent, the mate, a stupid-looking fellow, conducted me into the cabin, a place six feet ten in size; and, as I have since imagined, fearing that he would have to give up his own berth to either myself

or some other passages of the Amazon, at once inquired of me if I had consulted the captain as to where I was to sleep; at the same time pointing to the right hand, and saying that that was the captain's berth, and informing me that that was his, to the opposite, on the left. After thanking the mate for his kind intelligence, and declining all intention of depriving either himself or the captain of their berths, he then invited me into the aft cabin, or ladies' apartment, as he called it, at the same time showing me a small low door on the left, whilst he proceeded to open one on the right. I accepted his invitation, by stooping about one half, and passing through the door to the stern of the schooner. The kind and polite mate unnecessarily invited me to take a seat, for it was impossible to have occupied any other than an inclined or sitting posture.—The mate having located himself opposite to me, in a most ludicrous manner began to expostulate upon the mode of sea travelling, and was winding up his lucid, and, as he thought, interesting description of a life upon the sea, by informing me that the apartments we then occupied was the most desirable of any aboard the vessel, and was exclusively designed for the ladies; although at the moment I could not discover a particle of bed or bedding, but, to the contrary, the little place seemed to be crammed with kegs of crackers, demi-johns, old clothing, besides many other articles of ship stores; and as the mate was continuing to say, that, as he had no doubt but that I was a gentleman, he should not, on his part, hesitate to put me in with the ladies, if there should be any, to take passage on board of the Amazon. However, it happened that just at that moment, when I had concluded that I was destined to be obliged to lodge with the ladies, in so small a chamber, the good and merry little Captain Harding came hastily down the stairway of the gentleman's cabin, and called aloud for his mate in a true seaman-like manner. Mr. Holmes appeared to be as much alarmed as confused, and hesitatingly responded to his superior officer; and as the mate was making his exit from the ladies' apartment into the gentlemen's cabin, the captain demanded the reason of his coming out of that place? when Mr. Holmes informed him that he was only showing one of the passengers the berths of the ladies' cabin, so that he might make choice of one previous to any of them coming on board. Captain Harding seemed to be exasperated at what the mate had said—and remarked, that the ladies, dear things, had always been welcome to his berth, as it was the best aboard the Amazon. "There, Sir," turning to myself, who by this time was standing in the gentlemen's cabin, "you shall have my berth, Sir, as it has the only good feather bed

aboard, and I shall sleep in yours, mate: so you had better be looking out in time for a choice berth in the ladies' cabin—hah!" Captain Harding then called his steward, and ordered him to spread the table with wines, sardines, cheese, crackers, and cigars: and a jolly time myself and Mr. Duncan, who had by this time arrived, and the only other passenger, had with the merry little Captain Thomas Harding.

It was not until five o'clock in the morning, that the steamer Arkansas took the Amazon in tow. The steamer had at each side of her a large ship, and the Amazon constituted the sixth in number of the schooners that were fastened by long cables to the stern of the Arkansas. The tow having then secured its full complement of vessels, it proceeded down the Mississippi river; and a hard time we had of it; for we had not been under way more than two hours before the fog became so dense that the tow had to cast anchor, and was unable to make head before daylight the following morning, when we raised steam and started; but again, at nine o'clock in the evening, we were stopped by the fog, being about twenty-five miles from the Balize; and at half-past six o'clock, on the following morning, the mate of the Amazon, Mr. Holmes, informed the mate of the Arkansas that the tow was adrift, and told him to get the steam up as soon as possible; and owing to the mismanagement of the tow-boat, in the hurry and alarm of the moment, a backward revolution was given to the wheel, which caused the steamer and one of the ships to come astern upon our broadside, and crowded the Amazon hard upon the bank, which broke our starboard rail abreast the mainmast, and four of the stanchions and bulwarks, strained our main rigging, broke our larboard cat-head bow-rail, carried away our jib-stay, and caused us to sustain several other lighter damages forward. As for myself, I had not at that hour arisen, yet from the forcibleness of the concussion of the tow against our vessel, I was violently thrown from my berth on to the floor of the cabin, where indeed I did not tarry, but recovering myself I hastened on deck, where indeed I did not tarry, but recovering myself, I hastened on deck, where luckily I had just arrived in time to witness, for the first time, a sea-captain in a passion; and I can with truth say, that I had no idea that so small a man as Captain Harding had as strong a pair of lungs, or such fluency of language. The Captain of the Arkansas requested the Captain of the Amazon to let go the hawser; but the angry little Harding peremptorily refused; saying that he should not let go until the steamer had hauled his windlass and foremast out of his vessel, for he did not think of being left in distress. How-

ever, the Captain of the *Arkansas* ordered the men to cut the hawser, and the *Amazon* swung round, whilst the tow was getting out her anchors, which being done, the *Amazon* heaved the hawser again, and was towed by her about five miles; but the steamer getting along so slowly with but one wheel, the other having become disabled, Captain Harding thought it best to cut off from her, and accordingly we made sail for the Balize, which we reached on the 11th inst.; and, notwithstanding the schooner had received considerable damage, yet I determined to proceed on my voyage with the brave little Captain of the *Amazon*.

Upon my arrival at the Balize, it was with much regret that I learned that Mr. John Duncan would go no farther; for I found, on my short acquaintance with him, a most interesting travelling companion. Mr. Duncan had won my friendly feelings, and I had hoped that the tedium of a sea voyage would have been whiled away in the pleasant society of a fellow countryman. It is to those alone whose misfortune, or peculiar condition, can with deep sensibility feel the solace of friendship, which agreeably to the common acceptation of the word, as the poet has called it, "but a name;" and as an unremembered author, I think, remarks, "The hopes that are formed but to be disappointed; the disappointments which are in reality blessings; the longings for that which would prove destructive; the joys that kill, and the sorrows that make alive, can only be consoled with, and enjoyed alone, but by the participation of friendship." I am not one of those who believe that the better feelings of the human heart should be alienated from his fellow beings, because there are some false friends; but, to the contrary, think that there is much reward in even a casual or partial union with others; although, ultimately, the object of our love or friendship should prove false or coquetish. It therefore cannot be surprising that I, with much lively sensibility, bade adieu to my friend, for he was the only American of whom I could at that time take leave; and, in doing so, I felt that the last link had been broken between myself and my fellow citizens of the United States.

True to the adage, that the "loss of one is the gain of another," for I perceived the captain, who had gone ashore, returning, having in his boat two strangers, whom I hoped were passengers, and indeed it resulted in the fact, that when they came on board, one of them, Mr. James Duplessis, was bound for Mexico. All being on board, and the pilot waiting, the *Amazon* weighed anchor, and we again sailed for the Gulf, by way of the N. E. Pass. When we had arrived there, a most

singular phenomenon was to be witnessed; for as the Mississippi river, which had for more than two thousand miles irresistibly swept every thing before it, mingling in its muddy and rapid current alike the forest and the "terra firma," yet, as it met its mother ocean it was, with a degree of modesty unexpected—for just where the river mouthed against the sea, there seemed to be a perfect line of demarcation between the dark waters of the river, and the clear, deep, blue salt element; notwithstanding the river came rushing, as long as confined between banks, with bounding wave and foaming surge, yet as it breasted the sea, all was calm and tranquil; for the waters of the mighty deep held it back as but a thing of nothing, and the salt flood of the Gulf seemed to spurn an union with its kindred element of the river, for it could not be perceived, just at the juncture, that there was a mingling of the two; but the pilot informed me that the current was supposed to be the strongest at the bottom of the river, and by that means, was lost in the ocean.

At the mouth of the N. E. Pass, the *Amazon* again cast anchor, for there the pilot, Captain John Brown, was to part with us; as also Dr. G. A. Bernard, who had accompanied his friend, Mr. Duplessis, thus far; likewise, Mr. Duncan, who was to return with the Doctor, in Captain Brown's boat.

As on this occasion there were more than myself to take leave of friends and fellow countrymen, some time was spent in many parting words, and aspirations for a happy and safe voyage. At length, the wine glass having passed around, and as Captain Brown had, in a most cordial manner shaken my hand, and turned to descend the side of the vessel to his boat, which was alongside, the captain, from some unperceived cause, was precipitated head foremost overboard into the sea. He was long out of sight, and to us all it seemed an age; at length, all observed the troubling of the water, and with animated hopes we expected to behold the Captain; but suddenly our joy was chagrined by the appearance of a huge monster of a Porpoise, who, rising almost out of the water, and giving one of his well known rotary evolutions, again disappeared. But Captain Brown did not tarry longer, for no sooner had the Porpoise been lost to our sight than the Captain rose to the surface, and, as I at that moment caught his eye, I never shall forget the expression of despair depicted upon his countenance. My friend, Mr. John Duncan, having leaped from the deck of the *Amazon* into the pilot boat, grasped the captain with his right hand and lifted him on board. Captain Brown, being saved from a watery grave, remarked that, notwithstanding he had fallen overboard, he had waked up the largest Porpoise

that he had ever seen; and again, an affectionate leave having been taken, the Amazon weighed anchor, and spread her canvass to a fair wind. In a few hours we were carried beyond the sight of land.

We had been at sea but three days, when it was with much regret I perceived that my accommodating little Captain Harding was confined to his bed, from severe indisposition, and my time was mainly occupied in watching his sick couch, which afforded me much pleasure, as the deportment of the captain so entirely differed from what I had understood to be the characters of sea captains; and I could not consent that a polite and good man should suffer in hours of extremity. But as I occasionally felt some symptoms of sea-sickness, by confinement below, it was my habit, in accompaniment with Mr. Duplessis, a very intelligent and agreeable gentleman, from the city of New Orleans, in the lapse of the evening to sit on deck, for at that hour the parching sun had lost half its power, and the delightful sea-breeze was most congenially refreshing to the traveller imprisoned in so small a compass as we had to occupy.

It was on the lovely evening of the 15th inst., when seated on the deck as above described, the wind continuing fair, and the Amazon rapidly splitting the waves, that I cast my eyes around upon the broad expanse of waters that encircled me, and then to the heavens above, when my attention was fixed upon an extended cloud far to the westward, and so perfect was the representation that, in the forgetfulness of the moment, I really imagined that I beheld the Blue Ridge Mountain, with its two high peaks of Otter; and, as I looked upon the view, my bosom not only glowed with admiration, but was filled with joy at an aspect familiar to me from my earliest infancy—and I could but exclaim, "Behold the Blue Ridge mountain; my own native scenery!" My exclamation attracted the attention of all who were near me, and as neither passenger nor crew had ever beheld the sight of that lovely mountain, I was called on to describe the resemblance; and at once, with an eagerness that would have surprised any individual familiar with the mountains of Virginia, I commenced the task. But, before completing the description my attention was arrested from my delightful theme by the increased violence of the wind, accompanied by that whizzing, whistling sound in its passage through the rigging of the vessel, which to a landsman is not only startling, but really makes his hair stand on an end. The mate having given the alarm, by shouting out "a Norther," a storm much more destructive than any other wind that sweeps the Mexican Gulf, and which is always pe-

riodical in the months of October and November. My attention having been thus diverted, and feeling filled with apprehension, I at once determined to go below, discovering as I did that I was in much danger, it then being night, by the swinging of the boom, as well as by the sweeping of the tacking of the vessel over the deck; and that intention was also hastened by the sudden heavy fall of rain. And thus, but a few minutes previous, little did I think that, in the playfulness of my thoughts, whilst resembling a cloud to a mountain, it was pregnant with a storm so soon to be avalanched upon us. Having reached the cabin, I soon felt my sickening sensations returning, by the increased and more violent motion of the vessel, and I accordingly climbed into my berth, for repose always relieved me from any nauseating feelings I might have experienced from sea-sickness. I had not long occupied my berth, when by the activity evinced by the crew, as well as from the violence with which the angry waves would beat against the sides of the vessel, that a storm of no ordinary character was raging. After I had listened some time to the loud and quick commands of the mate, that personage at length appeared in despair, and informed Captain Harding that a Norther was raging, and that he would be glad if he would come on deck, or else tell him what to do. The captain was at that time laying in his berth beneath my own, where he had been confined for the last three days, from an accidental blow he had received, being so disabled that he could but with difficulty get in and out of it. He, therefore, could only reply to his mate that he must do the best he could, and keep all hands busy. It was not long after the mate had returned to his command, before I was alarmed by hearing all on deck utter the shout of land! land! and the mate soon ordered the long-boat to be lowered. As the crew were busied in obeying the order, and having myself ascended the gangway, it was at that moment exclaimed, "A man overboard!" and the mate in the next instant responded, "He is lost! he is lost! Heave away, men!" I could not but feel the deepest sorrow for the fate of the poor sailor, and again returned to my berth to meet my own, whatever it might be, by the hands of a kind and divine Providence. But by his will we were saved, and the vessel preserved harmless from wind and wave; for as the long-boat had been let down, as a last resort, in case the schooner had been cast ashore, or driven on a rock, the wind by degrees ceased to blow. At the dawn of day as the sailors, by command, proceeded to raise the long-boat, which was still at our side, the silence and solemnity of the occasion evi-

dently demonstrated that poor Will, who was lost was remembered by all.

But as the sun ascended out of the sea, and lit up the eastern horizon, sublime indeed was the scene presented to our view; for whilst on the left was discovered a boundless expanse of water—to the right, arose, from the margin of the sea, the lofty range of, as the captain of the Amazon called them, the Perote mountains, which, as I was informed, were of a general elevation of about twelve thousand feet above the level of the Gulf. The mountains presented a dark, blackish appearance, being covered with forest as well as I could at the distance discover, on their lower regions. The scene was a most picturesque and congenial one to me; for whilst, by the light of day, the land seemed an anchor of hope, in the event of a storm, the scenery it presented reverted my thoughts back to my own native hills, so much beloved. Whilst the Gulf of Mexico is bound on the north and west by a flat country, scarcely rising above the level of the ocean, it seems that it is held to its place on the south by a long range of mountains, in a crescent form, and of singular beauty, against which the surging of the waves in their fury is harmless. However, agreeable to the old nautical adage, that "a calm always succeeds a storm," the day succeeding the night of the gale, we were in a state of perfect calm; nor did we make more than twelve miles progress during the period of twenty-four hours. This day was most amusingly spent in harpooning sharks, and also in hooking other fish, much to the joy of our Dutch cook, who, as they were hauled in, would dilate upon their specific qualities, explaining why the one was better for soup, whilst the other should be for the pan or broil.

On the 17th inst., although the calm continued, yet myself and Mr. Duplessis were richly repaid for all the delay, inconveniences and dangers we had encountered by having our attention called, on the morning of the day in question, to the magnificent view of the perpetually snow-capped Orizava, lying west of Vera Cruz; lat. 19 12, long. 96 08, and said by some to rise to a height of about 22,895 feet above the level of the sea. The Orizava, in its sublimity of aspect, can neither be imagined nor described, yet the impression it had upon my mind was that its lofty summit was the most beautiful scene of nature I had ever beheld.

The morning was clear and cloudless, in consequence of the calm of the preceding twenty-four hours, and it was therefore that, at a distance of forty miles from land, we had the

incomprehensible and beautiful view of the hoary height of the Orizava. To picture the scene so that the imagination could encompass its many beauties and grandeur, would be an undertaking beyond the most graphic powers of any pencil or pen; and, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that I have no intention of impeaching the fancy of the reader, who will excuse me when I say that the view, as presented to me, seemed to be a vast pile of mountains rising immediately from the margin of the sea, one above the other, of variegated heights and formations of peaks, covered by the deepest green vegetation, and that, too, perpetual; but, pre-eminently rising above them all, the eternally snow-capped monarch of mountains, in all the sublimity of grandeur, appeared in lofty magnificence to dazzle back the rays of the sun, reflecting, from its exceeding purity of whiteness, glittering gems of the most resplendent brightness, far above the comparatively diminutive aspirations of other lofty summits, or the rude and ambitious footsteps of inquiring man.

After we had for nearly two days been becalmed, in full view of the Orizava, on the morning of the 19th inst., a delirious trade wind, so called by the sailors, sprang up, and again put our fast-sailing little schooner in merry motion, by rapidly plunging it against the waves, and making it but a trifle to mount the stoutest of them. As evening approached, I observed the captain taking an observation with his spy-glass, and, on inquiring of him if he could look into port, he smilingly handed me the glass, saying, "There, look for yourself." When I had taken the instrument, after spying a few times to the right and left, the light-house and the Castle of San Juan de Ulloa fell full upon my sight; and, raising it a little higher, the walls of the city, the cupolas, domes, and high towers of both church and cathedral plainly informed me that the much desired port of Vera Cruz was in full view. Upon being satisfied that we were about to enter the destined haven, which, on one occasion at least, had been despaired of by me, I did not lose time, although the sea was rough, in making my face acquainted with my razor, to which it had been a total stranger for the last seven days, and in opening my trunk for the last time, until it should pass through the Custom-house; for at a distance we could perceive a pilot boat belting the breakers, upon which were visible several wrecks, which lay between us and the island of Sacrificios. To myself who, abroad, had never before witnessed the boarding by a pilot, it was an interesting sight. The boat was small and manned only by the pilot and a boy; it had to make a circuit of about two miles to reach us, whilst the

Amazon would have to sail scarcely one; and as the wind was high, and the boat light, it seemed to skim the water with a swiftness equivalent to a plumed arrow shot from an Indian bow. As the pilot came alongside the schooner, I was much amused by the declaration of our cook, who was a Dutchman, exclaiming that, if the pilot belonged to him, he would be certain of making his fortune, by exhibiting the man as the baboon of his race. Indeed the pilot to me was a curiosity, for added to his naturally dark and sun-burnt features, the long glossy hair of his head perfectly black, besides the grizzly-looking beard that covered his chin and mouth, in tom-puss fashion, circling up to his eyes, made the man appear more like a monster who had strayed from the frozen regions of the Orizava, or like the grizzly bear of the North, who had ventured to sea upon an iceberg in search of prey. The pilot being the first Mexican I had ever seen, I felt myself much disappointed, if he was a fair specimen, from what I had imagined their appearance to be; however, I afterwards learned that he was an Indian.

At six o'clock, P. M., we entered the port of Vera Cruz, which is of difficult access, and were safely anchored under the frowning guns of the Castle San Juan de Ulloa; and, as I cast my eyes along its battlements, the many marks of French cannon balls were yet plainly visible, being the remaining admonitions to Santa Anna of Louis Philippe's displeasure, and chastisement of French wrongs. Mr. Duplessis and myself at once determined to spend the night on shore, and as there are no wharves at Vera Cruz, we were politely tendered a small boat, by the captain of a Mexican steamer, as that of the Amazon was employed in placing the anchor of the schooner; our baggage, therefore, having been transferred to the boat, and having taken seats ourselves, we were landed in quick time, at a distance of about three hundred yards upon the Mole, which is extended into the water about fifty yards, from immediately opposite the only gate of the city fronting the sea. The Mole, as is the case always, upon the arrival of a vessel, was crowded with people from every clime, as well as by citizens, sailors, and soldiers of the city; and to me, who had for the first time landed upon the *terra firma* of a foreign country, the sight was striking and novel; for at one glance I beheld the black colour of the African—the tawny complexion of the Indian—the brunette of the Spaniard—as well as the fairer hue of the Europeans: and it did appear to me that had I been at the Tower of Babel, when the confusion of languages took place, my ears could not have been saluted by a greater jargon of

sounds, or my eyes with the sight of so much variety of costume; and, for a mixed multitude, it surprised me to behold such a marked indifferent expression of countenance and mien, of which I shall hereafter again speak; defying any stranger to tell who were the Mexicans, otherwise than from the uniforms of the soldiers. Although the Mexicans are more or less dark complexioned, yet there are a goodly number of people in Mexico who are of pure Castilian and Hidalgo blood of old Spain, as well as descendants of other Europeans and North Americans; and, therefore, the darker coloured portion of the population are the Indian, and the consequent shades produced from the admixture with the Indian; however, at the same time, there is no blood so pure in Mexico, but what is in some degree mixed with the native aboriginal Indian. The ancient Mexicans had the honour of planting their own race in Spain; for the "beautiful princess Tecuichpo is commemorated by the Spaniards, since from her, by marriage, are descended some of the illustrious families of their own nation."

In consequence of the lateness of the hour when Mr. Duplessis and myself landed upon the Mole, it was impossible for us to pass our trunks through the custom-house; we therefore repaired to the "*Casa de la Diligencia*," the Diligence House, the principal hotel kept in the place. Its landlord, was a fine looking Irishman, by the name of Bell. It was our determination to spend our first night in Vera Cruz, in quietness and repose, so that we might on the following morning feel refreshed from our sea-voyage, and thereby enjoy our ramble and the view of the city more; but how sadly were we disappointed; for the bells of the public buildings, that were constantly ringing in honour of a saint, as I was informed, perpetuated their clack-a-clack, and we had not more than fairly retired to bed by the hour of nine, than the loud report of a big gun from the Castle was heard; then followed the ringing of all the bells of the cathedral and churches, which produced the most deafening peal that had ever stunned my senses—this was followed by the beating of drums and the blowing of fifes and trumpets, and for the balance of the night, as if intended for our distress, *besides the diligent biting of fleas and mosquitoes* we were kept awake by the crying of the watch-word of the sentinels, who were posted at every corner of the street, two of whom had their position near to us; and for the first night, notwithstanding our anticipated luxury of sleeping in a bed on shore, I was kept listening to the stentorian voices of the sentinels crying every half hour—*Ave Maria purissima, los dos y media serenis, &c.*

The following morning being Sunday, the 20th instant, Mr. Dimond, the American Consul for the port of Vera Cruz, a polite gentleman, and withal very accommodating, marked for his business habits, did me the favour of calling on me, and invited me to take a stroll with him to view the emporium of the great mart of Mexico, denominated by its founder, Hernando Cortes, in 1519, Valla Rica de la Vera Cruz—the rich town of the true cross—and so long as the Spaniards were its owners, it was in truth the rich town of the New World. The city of Vera Cruz is enclosed by a continued wall, built of coral stone and brick, stuccoed on the outer and inner sides. The streets, running north and south, east and west, are narrow, and all paved with stone, shipped from the United States. The town is laid off in squares, and the houses are a solid mass of buildings, covering the whole squares. When you have seen one house in Vera Cruz you have seen them all, for there is a perfect sameness in their architecture. The houses are built of stone or brick, and stuccoed on the outside, which is whitewashed or painted. Each building being of a square form, has its paved or flagged court within, and a flight of steps conducts you to the corridor of each story, the corridors extending around the building, as often as there are stairs, are broad and paved with either brick or tile, and strongly cemented together. The doors of the rooms all open to the corridors, and the floors of the rooms are also of file, and with very few exceptions of Mosaic marble. The floors, by the most tastefully cultivated people, are either painted, or covered with oil cloth or carpets. It is but seldom that windows are seen in the first stories of buildings; and when perceived they are strongly barred with iron grating. There are no windows to the outer walls of the upper stories, excepting those fronting the streets; the greater number of windows to the buildings are from the inner walls, looking out upon the corridors. Generally, to each door and window fronting the street, there is a short jutting platform, railed and barred with iron, upon which the inhabitants can sit or stand for observation or airing; and often have I been reminded, when observing the inhabitants seated on these platforms, in their silent, demure and solemn gravity, looking in a most careless and spiritless manner, upon all that might be transpiring around them, of a Beaver Village, where here and there some dark, grave beaver of a fine fur would be sunning in his window, not knowing that happiness or misery dwelt in the breasts of any other creature but itself, and when satiated with looking and sunning, dive back again into his strong hole.

The houses of the city, without exception, are flat-roofed;

the roofs being covered with tile or brick, and strongly cemented, and thus rendered fire and water proof; however, fire is the least of all the dangers that a Mexican anticipates to befall his house, for it is universally without a chimney. On the tops of the buildings are built observatories, which, at a distance improves the view of the town. In front of the Casa de la Diligencia, is a Plaza, or public square, of about two acres of ground, and directly opposite the Casa de la Diligencia is what was once the Palace Royal, but now a barracks and a prison. The public buildings, and especially the churches, are of stupendous dimensions and magnificently finished within.

There is a religious building in Vera Cruz, of Jesuit origin, noted for its massiveness and the great strength of its walls, for the Jesuits were not only remarkable for their ambitious grasping after power, but also for fortifying themselves in whatever they undertook. The elegance of one private building above another, can only be discovered by entering into the court of the house, as but seldom do they make much outside show. On some of the squares, the portals extend over the side-walks, and thus the citizens in the streets are protected from the inclemency of the weather, and the intense heat of the sun. I was not in any of the houses at Vera Cruz but those occupied by foreigners, and I did not observe any material difference, as to the manner in which they were furnished, from those of the United States, saving that the corridors were hung around with cages filled with many coloured birds, and whilst, indeed, some were sweetly warbling notes divine, yet the intolerable jargon of the parrot, with his ear-piercing whistling, and squalling, entirely destroyed the melody of the other beautifully feathered songsters.

There was also one other thing that invariably attracted my attention wherever I went, whether in public or private buildings, viz: a brass urn, called a *Brazero*, in which were heaped live coals of fire, and as an Englishman of poetic imagination remarked, "that eternal fires were kept burning in those brazeros in imitation of the ancient Mexicans, who kept perpetual fires in their temples in honour of the sun;" however, no one could long remain in ignorance of their purpose, as the inhabitants never passed in or out without first touching the end of their paper or tobacco cigars, to a live coal of the brazeros, and thus, by that means, keep the eternal fires burning also at their mouths, whilst two streams of perpetually, curling smoke were issuing from their nostrils; for the Mexican first swallows the smoke, and then ejects it through his nose, believing it to be a very beautiful sight.

The health of Vera Cruz is perhaps worse than that of any other place on the habitable globe, and it is calculated that one-fifth of its inhabitants annually perish; for, from the month of June until October, the Mexican Vomito has a reign of terror, carrying to the tomb the old and young, and but seldom sparing the foreigner. The sickness of Vera Cruz is attributed to the increased intensity of the sun's heat, reflected from the high white sand-hills, that overlook the town, as also from the poisonous vapour which arises from the stagnant waters of the lakes and swamps which surround the city. The venomous insects that infest that hot region add likewise in no small degree, by never leaving the inhabitants to repose, and consequently causing feverish excitement and irritation, to promote disease; yet, it is asserted in history that, previous to the discovery of Mexico, and long after its settlement, the mortality as now known at Vera Cruz had not its existence; and thus, but in another instance, exhibiting the fact that, wherever the white man erects his habitation and plants civilization, pestilence and bilious maladies are his consequent accompaniments. However, the Northerners at Vera Cruz, like the frost at New Orleans, purify the atmosphere, and dissipate disease. The Northerners, as before stated, are periodical, in the months of October and November, and notwithstanding their destructive tendency upon the sea, yet they have a highly beneficial effect on land, breaking down the luxuriancy of vegetation on the coast, and driving before them all infection which the intense heat of summer may have taken from the decomposition of the vegetable kingdom; and thus it can be easily perceived that nature, in her economy, must have designed that as the frost never falls upon the plains of Mexico to kill malaria and destroy green vegetation, those north winds so much dreaded at sea, are sent in blessing to the landsmen.

Soon after my arrival at Vera Cruz, I gave to the servant who attended my room some clothing to be washed; but he soon returned with my bundle, bringing with him a German lady of the establishment as his interpreter, and informed me that the washerwoman refused to take the clothes, unless I would release her from all responsibility if a Norther should carry them away; whereupon assuming the hazard, on the following day, upon short notice, the winds came, and scattered my clothing like kites in the air, some to the country, and some to the sea, and some perhaps to needy Mexicans. The inhabitants, on the first appearance of the coming storm, are compelled immediately to tightly bar their doors and windows, stopping up the key-holes, and every other crevice, and

to keep them so, long after the Norther ceases to blow, to prevent light articles of their houses from flying away, as also their eyes from being put out by the sand thickly floating in the air.

A French gentleman, Mons. P. Thuillier, described to me the terrible havoc of a Norther, as seen by himself from his own window, in which nine vessels perished, one of which was driven against the walls of the city, whilst another was upset upon the beach, and on the following day, when she was scuttled, six live men, to the joy and surprise of the wreckers, were disembowelled from the schooner, which was half filled with water.

CHAPTER III.

Dined with Mr. Dimond. Descriptions of ruins. Isla de los Sacrificios. War-god Huitzilopotchili. The Mexicans believe that the period had arrived for the return of their deity. Cannibal priests. Arrival of Cortes. Montezuma's embassy. Vespus. Marina. Arrest of four Americans and two Dutchmen. Spanish treasure. Consent of Santa Anna to search for money. Arrest of Captain Place. Four days in Vera Cruz. Departure from Vera Cruz. The Ladrones. Description of them. Duplicity of the Mexicans. Santa Anna's wooden leg.

MR. DIMOND, with whom I dined on Sunday, the first day that I spent in Vera Cruz, was a native of the State of Connecticut; but his lady was a Virginian, which fact I was not apprised of until I had remarked to him, whilst at his house, the striking resemblance I discovered in a portrait likeness that hung in his drawing-room, of Dr. Parker, formerly of Virginia; when the consul informed me, that the old doctor was his father-in-law;—a most singular coincident. Mr. Dimond, for many years previous to his removal to Vera Cruz, had been the American Consul at Port au Prince, and in his conversation with me unhesitatingly said, that it was his conviction, resulting from his long residence in Hayti, that the slaves of the South, in the United States, were happier, and better provided for, than the blacks of that island, with their boasted freedom. Dinner being over, I accepted his polite invitation to accompany him in a walk to the *Passio*, which name, as I understood, means a drive or promenade.